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AUTHOR Smithmier, Angela
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ABSTRACT

Community-based interagency collaboration among schools and other public service agencies is one reform idea for addressing the complex conditions of children with a high level of needs. This paper presents findings of a study that explored the workings of one community-based collaboration, referred to as the Community-Based Collaboration for Families (CBCF), in two low-income neighborhoods of a midsized midwestern city. The study sought to examine the ways in which the school structures, routines, and regularities changed or resisted the goals of the collaboration. Data were obtained through observation; document review; and interviews with 31 CBCF team members, school-community liaisons, residents, agency administrators, and 130 students. The paper discusses three themes of resistance: (1) the rigidity of school-ascribed roles; (2) the resulting focus on students as clients separate from their families; and (3) the various and conflicting conceptions of time. The findings demonstrate that the rigidity and regularities of the school cannot be reconciled by simply setting up a "link" between schools and organizations. Indeed, the link may operate inadvertently as a foil for change. A prerequisite for an integrative approach in collaboration may require the disruption of fundamental conventions, routines, and forms, such as roles, responsibilities, clients, and time. In sum, connections between agencies are as vulnerable as the weakest link, and simple links cannot reconcile rigid conventions and regularities. Developers of agency-school collaboration should consider alternative understandings of roles, responsibilities, and time. (Contains 18 references.) (LMI)

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Schools and Neighborhood-Based Collaboration: Structural Resistances and Realities

Angela Smithmier

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Please direct correspondence to the author at:
Department of Educational Administration
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1025 W. Johnson Street
Madison, WI 53706
608-265-6241
email: amsmithm@students.wisc.edu

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Introduction

The needs of some children are complex, and meeting those needs in the interest of school success is a complex enterprise. Community-based interagency collaboration among schools and other public service agencies[1] is one reform idea for addressing the complex conditions of children with high needs (Chaskins and Richman, 1993). This reform is based on at least one assumption which is that in order to integrate services, schools as organizations will or are able to change.

From the broad-based school-community collaboration literature, an important point of focus regarding organizational change is emerging. This focus concerns the structures, routines and regularities of organizations (i.e., schools and other public agencies). Recently, researchers have made calls to scholars to probe the "deep structures" of schools (Crowson and Boyd, 1995), and to uncover the "deficiencies" of organizations (Adler and Gardner, 1994). Other scholars question the nature of organizational self-preservation by way of routine and regularity (Capper, 1994; Scheurich, 1995). As a way to focus on issues of school organizational structures, I center this inquiry on community-based collaboration around the following question: In what ways, if any, have the school structures, routines and regularities changed or been resistant to accommodate community-based interagency collaboration?

In this analysis, I examine one community-based collaborative effort in a mid-sized Midwestern city. The goals and purposes of the collaboration effort, Community-Based Collaboration for Families (CBCF)[2] are to integrate multiple functions of various agencies

[1]The notion of linking schools with community or external services goes by any number of names, including school-linked services, integrated services, comprehensive services, full-service school, coordinated services, preventive services, etc. I choose to refer to this effort as community-based collaboration. These services are defined differently in different communities depending on the needs, the acting agencies, the focus and goals, etc.

[2] For purposes of confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used throughout this paper.

through delivery of prevention and intervention services to children and families with high needs. CBCF is located in two separate low-income neighborhoods which are each constructed in the local daily press as "high crime" and "high risk" areas. The community-based collaborative, CBCF, is housed in the apartment complexes in these neighborhoods and is staffed by representatives from four public agencies: the school district, county social services, city public health and the city police department. The elementary, middle and high school representatives are school social workers as well as some administrators. In addition, some community residents work on the behalf of the school as school-community liaison. The collaborative team is guided by a 14-member oversight committee with representative administrators from each of the sponsoring agencies.

Related Literature

Community-based collaboration has been approached from many different angles. As a response to community needs, school-community partnerships have been explored (Smylie and Crowson, 1993; Stone, 1993). As an efficiency model, centralization of school-linked services and coordination have been examined (Kahne and Kelley, 1993); as a policy initiative, organizational processes have been critiqued (Adler and Gardner, 1994; Cibulka, 1995). As well, integrated approaches in restructured schools have been examined (Wehlage, Smith and Lipman, 1992; White and Wehlage, 1994).

Rogers (1982) suggests in a retrospective organizational review that since the 1970s, efforts to integrate services have not been successful. Political, legal and technical barriers are immutable, the authors argue, and they outweigh the pressures and the benefits of coordination. Moreover, the "core technologies" of agencies, such as time, funds, and personnel (cf. Crowson and Boyd, 1995), are not easily changed because individual agencies are unwilling to compromise or share their core technology. Another organizational analysis

from Mitchell and Scott (1994) argues that individual service agencies continue to see "clients" only from their agency or professional_perspective. The representatives in interagency collaboration, for example, continue to operate from a singular perspective rather than from a "blended" or integrated perspective. Mitchell and Scott suggest that agencies only see the fragment of the child that their agency and professional training can address rather than seeing the "whole child.".

March and Olsen (1984) observe that insight on organizational change may hinge on understanding the diverse elements of organizations such as "conventions, rituals, role obligations, rules, normative structures and standard operating procedures" (March and Olsen: 173). Other scholars point out that current systems that serve children and families are organizationally deficient, and in order to understand organizations - and the politics of them - we must recognize the various institutional "networks" within them (Adler and Gardner, 1994; Crowson and Boyd, 1995). Adler suggests that "When an organization begins a collaborative effort, it is constrained by its institutional network. For example, norms of practice may make collaboration more difficult . . . [and] links between various services and the public school [make] the inter-organizational connections . . . complex and difficult to negotiate" (1994: 4-5).

Another institutional side that Crowson and Boyd (1994) highlight is the protected and deeply entrenched, taken-for-granted rules, "scripts" and routines. If properly understood, the authors argue, the complexities of various service agencies and schools (such as shared language, bureaucratic processes, reporting formats and routines) can enrich the networking experiencing for collaborative purposes.

However, Scheurich (1994) makes a distinct argument against learning the organizational networks, routines, processes, and conventions for purposes of collaboration.

This author refers to shared processes or networks as "powerful 'grids' of regularities" (1994: 7) that determine the parameters of social problems and, with the same reasoning, constitute the range of acceptable policy solutions. The danger of this, Scheurich warns, is that the same rules and regularities that exist in separate organizations (i. e., schools, public health, social services) will simply be repeated and adopted as agencies make accommodations in working together. What is problematic with this schema, the author argues, is that agencies have not necessarily been doing things "right" in the first place, and what has been done in the past is not worth repeating.

In the name of community-based collaboration, Scheurich's poststructural critique cautions against simply adding a few extra linkages among and between current social arrangements of organizations; this does not alter the conventions and regularities of institutions as they presently are. He explains, "If present social, health, and schooling services have to date not been able to significantly 'solve' this large social problem, it is difficult to believe that linking them together would seriously impact a problem as sizeable" (1994: 23-24). Rather, he argues, more fundamental change in social, health, and schooling services is in order. Policy choices should be expanded beyond the usual suspects -- the "grid of regularities" -- which have proved limited.

In this study, I attempt to look beyond the formation of "linkages" that have been made between organizations in a multi-agency collaboration effort. Instead, I question the ways that structures in organizations have changed or can change to accommodate the goals of the collaboration.

Theoretical framework

This inquiry into community-based collaboration was informed by a poststructural perspective. That is to say, the analysis of data here considers the power of regularity and

taken-for-granted assumptions at the intersection of human agency with organizations. In this analysis, I question the conventions, regularities and routines of complex organizations which counter the individual efforts of school representatives and the schools' subsequent resistance to change.

Poststructuralism acknowledges the existence of power relations in human and organizational relationships as well. Lather (1991) points out that poststructuralism questions "basic assumptions [that] might be seen as an effort to break out of the limitations of increasingly inadequate category systems and toward theory capable of grasping the complexities of people and cultures they create" (1991: xvi).

As an analytical framework, poststructuralism problematizes relationships between and among players in a school and community collaborative effort that moves us to consider a broader range of understanding, and therefore, a broader range of arrangement, networks and, possibly, choices.

Methodology

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have referred to theory, method and analysis as the "three interconnected, generic activities" which define the qualitative research process (1994: 11). The interplay of theory, method and analysis, or as Lather (1991) has described the "interdependence of method, theory and values" (emphasis added) (1991: 14) is most significant and worth consideration in the design, conduct and process of research. Methodologically, a qualitative approach is most useful for accessing the perspectives of the multiple players involved in such a collaborative, as well as observing and deconstructing the regularities, "scripts" and assumptions within bureaucratic public agencies.

To broaden the understandings of an inquiry into community-based collaboration, qualitative methods guided the data collection. Qualitative research serves best to elicit the

routine ways in which people operate and make meaning of their world. This methodology allows the researcher to address the perspectives of study informants through interviews, through observations of interaction in daily life, and through review of records or documents kept by those who give their social life meaning.

Nature and extent of data collection

Several spheres are involved in this analysis and data are culled from a larger study, of which this paper is only a part.[3] Since 1992, a team of seven has amassed a sizeable amount of data. Interviews were conducted with 31 community-based team members in two neighborhoods, as well as with school-community liaisons, residents of the neighborhoods, and administrators of each of the four participating agencies (including four school principals from one elementary school, two middle schools and one high school). Exit interviews were conducted as team members left the collaboration, and a focus group was conducted with all team members from one neighborhood community-based team. More than 130 school-aged students were interviewed as well.[4] Over 75 neighborhood team meetings were observed (lasting at least two hours each) between Fall, 1992 and Spring, 1995. Documents were reviewed including three years of local daily press clippings, quarterly reports written by team members, project-related memos, newspaper accounts of neighborhood activities, speeches and press releases. Of the team members and administrators interviewed, nearly all are Caucasian with the exception of two school-community liaisons, one parole officer and one

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[3] This paper is a small part of a much larger study on "Community-based Interagency Collaboration: A Critical Ethnography." The research is funded by the Spencer Foundation. Dr. Colleen Capper is the Principal Investigator.

[4] A separate document, "Listening to the Children," was produced in which emergent themes from student interviews are highlighted. This document was created for neighborhood residents, service providers and school personnel in response to their requests for insights of the children. A method section is included which outlines the fact that these interviews were conducted by school-aged students.

community-support specialist. Nearly all residents of the two neighborhoods are African-American, although there are some Caucasian and Southeast Asian residents in each.

Findings: Multiplicities that Contribute to Resistance

In this examination of the ways that school structures, routines and regularities have changed or been resistant to accommodate community-based collaboration, three distinct but related themes of resistance emerged around the issue of school organizational structures, and the extent to which structures appear to make schools seem resistant in a collaboration effort. The first theme centers on the rigidity to which schools ascribe the roles and responsibilities of school members in the collaborative effort. The school team members on CBCF did not easily adjust to their new roles. As well, role rigidity narrowed the school personnel's understanding of shared responsibilities for all children. A second and related theme notes that role rigidity limits collaborative team members' understandings of a student as a child, or a student as a "whole child," a basic premise of interagency collaboration. A final theme considers the various and conflicting conceptions of time, an organizational structural feature, which seems to encumber the accommodation of community-based collaboration.

As a pretext to the emergent themes, it is important to understand the schools' motivation behind the idea of collaboration and commitment to the enactment. There is no mistake that the schools are committed to the idea of community-based collaboration. Schools recognize the interplay of neglect, abuse, addiction, poverty and other barriers associated with school preparedness and school success. They have been and continue to be members "at the table" in the design and implementation of this combined social and educational policy reform. Administrators have designated school representatives who are allowed time out of the school to participate and contribute to weekly collaborative meetings around children and families with high needs. As well, the school sponsors a handful of programs specifically for

the students in the low-income neighborhoods. There are several demonstrations of commitment to the idea of collaboration (i.e., African Ethnic Academy, Schools and Communities United, Families and Schools Together).

Yet, according to many participants - including school members - the accommodation between the school and other participating collaborative partners in this effort is not frictionless. An oversight committee administrator unequivocally stated that "the school has some problems" and that "in this whole education effort we might be able to do some 'mind set' changes and get more out of the schools." She attributes some of the problems to ineffective communication and to lack of power on the part of the school building personnel. She stated:

> I think it may be the school's own system that has made this the problem where maybe the school people haven't known, or haven 't been able or don't feel empowered to go straight to [the central office administrator involved in the project] (Interview transcript, 6/25/93).

A public health nurse who has been in one of the neighborhoods for more than five years observed that "the school hasn't philosophically bought into the concept" (Field notes, 2/9/94).

An administrator from the county human services department stated that she believed that the "the role of the schools in this is crucial . . . but schools are cumbersome." She later stated that "schools are the culprits" when it comes to collaboration because the schools are accustomed to the concept of people coming to them rather than the schools going outside of their arena. She said that "schools are used to the concept of getting people in the schools, so they're more comfortable [with that role]" (Interview transcript, 6/10/93, p. 38). Indeed, one of the school members on the CBCF team stated that when the idea of the collaborative was proposed by the county and the city, the "school was dragged in kicking and screaming" (Field notes, 2/9/94).

A school social worker, upon exiting the collaborative after three years, articulated in an interview a much larger organizational impasse that seems to state the difficulty of collaboration:

> [Y]ou go down the list of the administrators who are involved in this and none of them want to really embrace [this collaborative] . . . the schools have had interaction with all the agencies and trying to reach out to the private sector on developing these partnerships and all that. We've been doing that ..they have had that for 25 years in this business . . . nothing looks different. I mean the schools still operate essentially the same as they've always done. That's the one thing about [this collaborative] is that, I don't know that there has been any significant goal about changing the agency and the way we do business. Schools, I don't think, have not wavered even slightly about what they actually do with those kids in the schools (Interview, 3/17/95).

What can be made of this "school resistance?" Rather than reduce this difficulty of collaboration to resistance to change, a poststructural analysis problematizes conventional wisdom and asks what multiplicities contribute to this form of resistance. To disrupt - or consider differently - the idea of school resistance requires an examination of the school structures, routine ways of operating and regularities.

So what can we understand about the multiplicities that contribute to resistance? Interview data, documents and field notes point to distinct but related themes that contribute to the multiplicities around the perceived school resistance: role rigidity, narrowed responsibilities and the separation of the student from the child.

Role rigidity and narrowed responsibilities

The first expression of resistance to accommodation in collaboration was the rigidity to which the schools ascribed staff roles and responsibilities - a reflection of the schools' protection of its "core technologies." Personnel assignments are, and have been, a part of the enduring form of schooling structures (Rogers & Whetten, 1982). The community-based collaboration idea certainly did not disrupt this.

The school representative role in a collaborative effort is complex and problematic because it reduces the multiple functions and purposes of the school into the hands of one or two school team members per school. As well, the professional norm in a school role has historically been designed to reside within the classroom and certainly within the boundaries of the school building. This is in contrast to the more fluid nature of their collaborative team counterparts, such as the nurse, county social worker and neighborhood cops, whose "beat" has always been outside of their home agency. Their role is designed to roam outside of their agency boundaries and into "the field." The supervisor of the public health nurses on CBCF made this observation:

> "These professionals and organizations bring to this issue a very different [perspective] . . . the public health perspective is very community-based, very broad. The school perspective is very narrow . . . It's a very narrow role and that's what they're responsible for - taught to do. That's what their job description is . . . and to pull them out of that mold and into a community perspective takes time."

The schools' participation on an integrative effort was a departure from the school regularity. Based on the similarity and repetition of the comments, it appears that the school personnel had the most difficult time assuming a collaborative role. Accordingly, school representatives were frequently uncomfortable and confused about their new role(s).

Negotiating a collaborative role as representatives of a complex organization was often a subject of concern for school team members. Frequently, school staff held tight to conceptions that "that is not my job." A school-community liaison, one of the few African-American team members, was assigned a role as neighborhood outreach worker. She voiced frustrations about the position. A parole officer, another CBCF team member, tried to help quell the anxieties of the school-community liaison.

Parole officer: "Your frustration is why this team came together. In order to do our job we had to do all of this other stuff. You can't stay within the scope of your job. You have to go the extra mile."

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School liaison: "I am willing to do whatever it takes to do my job, but I'm not the social worker."
Parole officer: "You just answered your own question."
School liaison: "But I don't have the resources [to be a social worker]."
Neighborhood social worker: "We are the resources" (Field notes, 5/3/95).

One of the greatest challenges to collaboration is to understand the various roles and responsibilities of representatives from different agencies. Coming from their home agencies, representatives are clear about their role, identity, status, expectations and accountability. In a collaborative, an individual's role immediately begins to blur and becomes less clear. An example of this is poignantly illustrated in a dialogue among several front-line team members. A school social worker, recently assigned to work part-time in the neighborhood, often spoke of how "stressed" she was by the ambiguity of her assignment. In response to her ambiguity, a county social worker CBCF team member spoke about the need to be flexible in moving between a professional arena and the community-based collaborative. He pointed out that he has a separate function when he is at the county social work headquarters than when he works with the team; the team's public health nurse added that she has the same distinction; the team's police officer concurred. The school social worker's response was: "I feel like I need some support from somewhere to draw some lines around what I'm doing." The police officer, who had been in the neighborhood for five years, offered that maybe she should define the role of the schools.

> He stated: "I can see that this is something that the schools aren't doing because they're so busy doing the day to day issues. But there are larger issues as well" (referring to the overlap between the neighborhood and the school issues). He added, "One of the requirements for working in this office is the ability to deal with ambiguity." Another team member added, "If you're waiting for the team to figure out your role, then you're coming to the wrong people." The police officer added, "We don't function that way" (Field notes, 12/14/1994).

Perhaps as a matter of familiarity or out of habit, many collaborative members tend to

fall back into routine ways of operating. Research has documented that after years of professional training and development, changing one's role and working differently is not simple (March and Olsen, 1984). An elementary school social worker offered her perspective on collaboration in retrospect: "What really makes this [collaborative] different is that in the beginning, the system made us come and sit at these meetings for the first four months, and we didn't want to" (Field notes, 2/9/94). Part of her admission is that she was resistant to the idea at first, but it also points to her perception of a school system routine which "makes us do it." As stated earlier by an oversight committee member, the school people don't feel "empowered." The staff members in the collaborative effort, who are accustomed to hierarchical power structures that dictate actions, demonstrated resistance in their participation early on. The pattern(s) of assignments can contribute to fragmented conceptions about responsibilities to students.

Regarding the narrowed sense of responsibilities, one school team member used the image of the narrow neck of an hourglass to describe how his feelings as the link between the school and the community-based collaborative effort:

> It's sort of like an hour glass. We [school representatives] are the narrow neck of the bottle . . . there is this misguided notion that [information should] channel through me, channel through Hannah, channel through the people who are connected with [CBCF]. Well, if you do that, not a whole lot of sand can go through at one time . . . if I could foster direct connections between the staff and the neighborhood, things are just going to be much more efficient and productive. But it doesn't seem that way . . . it is all one way. If something comes up, it's 'get Tom, get Lloyd, get Hannah.' And it shouldn't be that way...that's why the [principal] can, you know, be seen in a meeting as not understanding the needs of families because too much of it comes through Hannah and me" (Focus group, 5/10/95).

Furthermore, in the view of at least one school team member, the collaborative was not only a mere "link" that removes the overall responsibility of the school, but he saw it as a way for school to relinquish some responsibilities to others:

> "And in the back of everybody's minds is 'If we can hire a bunch of Black people out in the neighborhood [referring to school-community liaisons], it will make our job easier.' There isn't really any agenda that says those people [community members on the collaborative team] will come in and actually enhance or change the way we do business. It's that they will help us do our business better . . . and we will have more control over them" (Interview notes, 3/17/95).

The role rigidity and narrowed responsibilities of a few representatives remove, if not relinquish, overall responsibility and information to the few who are designated to be a part of the collaboration. The collaborative is not necessarily viewed as a structural and organizational accommodation that is to be incorporated by the school as a whole. Rather, channeling information to the neighborhood through a few representatives relinquishes other staff from understanding the shared responsibility of all children in the school.

Setting the Agenda: Students as children

A second form of resistance centered around the various conceptions of at whom was aimed the focus of the community-based collaborative effort. In their participation in the collaborative, school personnel struggled with the other team members in determining the "client" and thus prioritizing the agenda items for the weekly meetings. Part of the struggle was in regard to how much emphasis should be placed on children versus how much emphasis should be placed on families, of which children are a part. The school seemed to operate as if only serving the student - just as they do in the school context. As an example, a school social worker offered her perspective: "The philosophical discussion is great, but it doesn't do anything for my kids over there (referring to the school). So for me, it doesn't do any good unless I talk about one of my kids" (Field notes, 11/30/94).

To fragment the child from the family, and to only work with the "student piece," negates the holistic approach of this collaborative. It became clear that the meaning of a holistic approach was understood differently by school personnel than it was from other

collaborative team members. The different understanding was best illustrated by a constant tension among team members in CBCF meetings, in one of the neighborhoods in particular.

> At the start of a collaborative team meeting, a school social worker said that the team should start an agenda, a "kid list." The county social worker on the team interjected and said that he calls it a "family list" and said that he's noticed before that school people take a different focus than the other agency people. Other team members agreed with his observation. The team went ahead and started the "family list" (Field notes, 1/11/95).

> [The following week at another collaborative team meeting] Two school social workers arrived on time while many of the others were taking care of other business and getting themselves prepared for the meeting. The two school social workers who were ready to begin the meeting suggested starting a "kid list." By the time the social workers were half-way through the list, the nurse, neighborhood cop and another school social worker had joined them at the meeting. As the school social workers continued to discuss certain students, the nurse kept asking who the parent was (Field notes, 1/18/95).

What at first seemed a matter of semantics later came to be understood as a matter of perspective on what the collaborative team's point of focus really was. After all, the word "family" appears in the name of the collaborative effort. The school personnel, in essence, thought of students in the context in which they saw them most often -- the school. This routine approach separated the child from a family system which is integrally-related to the efforts of the collaborative. The school members did not seem to change perspectives or accommodate the interests of the rest of the group.

Time boundaries

A third and interrelated manifestation of resistance considers the multiple conceptions of time, which is an organizational construct that sets limits and boundaries. CBCF team members held distinct understandings of the use and commitment of time. School personnel were much more rigid and unwavering in their conceptualization of time than their CBCF team counterparts. The construct of time boundaries gave expression to another form of

school resistance: team members accommodated the regularities of the school rather than the goals and purposes of the collaborative effort.

School lives and schedules are tightly defined by time and increments of time. The school-day schedules are generally rigid and confining. Not only are schools based on a nine-month schedule, they are also based on a seven-hour per day schedule that is largely defined by collective bargaining agreements. During the summer months, when children are in the community nearly full-time, school CBCF team members are off.

Time poses particular difficulties in a collaborative effort when several different agency representatives have complicated schedules, but also when the various agencies seem to hold different conceptions of time. The schools operated in the most defined time boundaries. It was generally understood by CBCF team members -- including school personnel -- that the school remained fairly inflexible because of time constraints. Illustrations of the various understandings of time follow from interview transcripts and field notes from various team members:

> School team member: "One of the things that kept me from, um, spending as much time in the neighborhood as I probably could spend is that you have to have a lot of time to spend . . . schools are very efficient from a time point of view. Neighborhoods are very inefficient from a time point of view, and so when I am on a schedule here of 50 minutes and the bell rings and most of our meetings take place within those time periods, it is very hard for me to make an adjustment in the neighborhood" (Interview notes, 6/3/93).

School principles held various conceptions of the kind of time that should be committed to the collaborative effort by separating the overall school needs and responsibilities from the staff's role(s) and responsibilities:

> Middle school principal: "Well, a concern is time. Take a person such as [school social worker] from our school. We need him desperately full-time no matter how much value we place on <u>that program</u> [referring to collaborative]. There is the urgency in the crisis kind of dimension we are always dealing with here . . . " (emphasis added) (Interview notes, 6/10/93).

In a focus group discussion with the members of one of the CBCF teams, various members talked about conventional understandings of time as opposed to a new use of and commitment of time in a collaborative mode. A county social worker viewed the value of time differently from the school member cited above. She stated:

> I think workers feel very conscious of time. Everything, every teacher, every minute has to be productive and they think, you know, if they're at the office doing paper work or making phone calls or whatever it is, you know, it is time that is accountable and productive somehow . . . Sitting at a [collaboration meeting] and listening to someone go on and on for two minutes trying to express an idea about why a family might be angry at this or that intervention may seem like a waste of time to them."

Based on experiences before CBCF and after, a school team member offered a contrast to the conventional conception of time and uses of time. He said he now sees the long hours needed in a collaborative effort as a short-term investment for a long-term effect:

> "One on-going family problem took one and one half hours to talk about [at a CBCF meeting], but it is one and a half hours compared to what I would conservatively guess was five years [in the conventional mode].

In a focus group discussion, one of the county social workers responded to this observation by referring to a collaborative discussion that was dedicated to the mother of a teenager who was in juvenile court:

> "How many hundreds of thousands of dollars would have been spent on just dealing with the problems of the oldest child without us ever getting to the point of realizing and dealing with the [AODA] problems of the mother? Another thing about investing time is that you not only deal with the family directly and on paper, but you foster a feeling in the neighborhood that we care. It takes time" (Focus group notes, 5/10/95).

Boundaries place limits on the extent to which a collaborative effort can operate. A more flexible use of and commitment of time may create the needed structural changes that accommodate a community-based effort.

In summary, the three themes of resistance described here demonstrate that the rigidity

and regularities of the school cannot be reconciled by simply setting up a "link" between schools and organizations. Indeed, the link may operate inadvertently as a foil for change. As long as the school remains rigid in its roles, responsibilities, and time constraints, the community-based effort will only work to accommodate the resistance, and not to facilitate change.

There are multiple forms through which school resistance is expressed in this collaborative effort. The implications of this resistance are discussed in the summary section that follows.

Implications

Community-based collaborative work with schools is ambiguous, it is stressful and it is ever-changing. There is little regularity or routine. Participation, nonetheless, requires an examination of assumptions by all members in the responsibilities incurred by the role(s), the kind of time that is required to perform roles and responsibilities, and in the multiple perceptions and understandings of the children and families they serve. When collaborative team members, such as school members, continue to view roles and responsibilities and time boundaries from narrowed and singular perspectives, the conventions and regularities of the organization are maintained, and schools appear to be resistant to change. Accordingly, a prerequisite for an integrative approach in collaboration may require the disruption of fundamental conventions, routines and enduring forms, such as roles, responsibilities, clients and time. I will discuss four implications related to the disruption of routines and conventions related to schools.

First, to operate in routine roles is not only comfortable when faced with ambiguity, it is supported by boundaries and regularities. Role rigidity supports the resistance to adaptation and accommodation required in interagency collaboration. For school members to participate

in a collaborative effort, but to then apply conventional standards of operation to the effort, is merely a symbolic act which further maintains the "grid of regularity." A broader conceptualization of the role recognizes that there are multiple conceptions of how one operates, but also multiple and broadened conceptions of who the "client" is. This broadened notion of roles and responsibilities loosens strict conceptions around labels, such "those kids" who are "at risk" and with "high needs." A broader consideration of roles adds depth to the overall responsibilities.

A second implication is that by narrowing the roles and responsibilities to a few school members "squeezes" too much sand through the narrow neck of an hourglass which does a disservice to the school members involved and a disservice to the recipients. The school members are overwhelmed with the responsibility of representing the whole school and the neighborhood and thus fall back into familiar albeit rigid role identities. It also limits students and parents from accessing the multiple resources in the schools - which again runs antithetical to the original premise of collaboration.

A third implication is that until schools are prepared to widen their lens on the nature of children - and all of their attendant issues - we will continue to work with fragments of issues related to "studenting" -- never fully realizing that the potential for student success is only as great as that for childhood success. This is not to suggest that schools should, in any way, take on the roles of parent and social worker. Indeed, the collaborative is designed to supplement those roles - the school role is to merely form new arrangements, commitments and structures in their work. What this suggests is that educators make the leap outside of the school walls if not literally than figuratively, and come to understand the multiplicities and complexities of children.

Finally, a fourth implication is that time - as defined by Carnegie units and agriculture

harvesting seasons - are due for reexamination, if not in general, then certainly when committing to a community-based collaborative. In a study on time requirements for teachers in restructuring, Cambone (1995) found that reform efforts often ignore the multiple constructs, boundaries, rhythms and patterns of time for teachers (p. 512). What is infrequently examined in the design of collaborative services is the possibility of the disruption of time boundaries and patterns. But, at the same time, school personnel must consider committing to a new initiative while at the same time relying on conventional standards such as 50 minute time blocks. Full commitment means abandoning constraints that prevent full participation.

In sum, connections between agencies are as vulnerable as the weakest link, and simple links cannot reconcile rigid conventions and regularities. To extend the schools' scope, and to consider alternative understandings of roles, responsibilities and time constraints, is one break from the age-old and enduring form of schooling.

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